

Replace by Curmudgeon

1	2		3	4	5		6		7	8		9
		10										
11		12				13		14				
	15							16				
17			18	19			20					
		21			22		23		24		25	
26						27						
28					29	30		31		32		33
	34	35		36					37		38	
39	40					41			42			
43			44									
45								46				
47					48							

Every across clue leads to the answer that must be entered, but each of those answers can be anagrammed to give a thematic word with one additional letter. A sequence of six of those letters suggests the theme, as does the title 'Replace'. More than one down answer fits the pattern. Solvers must select the highest of the thematic down-clue items and write its name below the grid. 5d is in *Collins*.

Across

- 1 Unstable, difficult for some (5)
- 5 Inept row about fortified alcoholic drink (8, 2 words)
- 10 Fliers, following level, select manoeuvring (10)
- 11 Miscreants present idiosyncratic behavioural features (8)
- 14 Young relative's eye-opener in French resort (5)
- 15 Be pleased with musical ornament (6)
- 16 Seashell, first of two not originally found (5)
- 17 Turned over by hoist, a bar rotates into coincidence with another plane (6)
- 20 Medical officer ultimately busy circling steamship, unlike proverbial rolling stones (5)
- 21 English crowd locally here and there in times gone (5)
- 23 Unwrapped lint might finally treat old bruise (6)
- 26 Pates in the Globe, no less, trimmed at last (5)
- 27 Led around donkey, one at first caught by running noose (7)
- 28 Part of an argument over layers in a chloroplast (5)
- 29 Liberal intercepting quantity of cash in deprived city area (4)

- 35 Small local sample of unruly teds (4)
- 37 Decay one cake of bread (4)
- 40 Difficult keeping old treasure (5)
- 41 South Asian people sorted out alpines (7)
- 43 Repairs joints in brickwork with regard to details (8)
- 45 Daughter pursuing love affair told exaggerated stories (8)
- 46 Very good German military man for some (5)
- 47 Quench small volume of water (5)
- 48 Songbird drops fine grub and caterpillar (8)

Down

- 1 About essentially pushiest calls for instances of reemploying (9)
- 2 Dealer in stocks peeled waterproof off (8)
- 3 Reportedly capsize in German port (4)
- 4 Extracted from eye, tiny creature (4)
- 5 Priest is initially such a fussy and prim person (5)
- 6 Refreshing inactivity in fire station (4)
- 7 Not entirely odd southern ways of damming a river (5)
- 8 Individual instances of mites lowering head (5)
- 9 Made an effort, unusually exasperated, abandoning, sadly, ASAP (7)
- 12 Somewhat sore, belligerent insurrectionist (5)
- 13 About to cherish drink (4)
- 14 Once ninth hours, now mostly applied to Sabbath (5)
- 18 Somehow mean to have the last word (4)
- 19 Army guarding larger than normal fighting dog (4)
- 20 Surprisingly musical not extremely cacophonous caterwaul (5)
- 22 Detected upset child supported by chief journalist (5)
- 24 Ultimately elect overthrown prince for ruler (4)
- 25 Large mammal perishes turning up headless (3)
- 30 Provided means from time to time appropriate for fasting period (6)
- 31 Listless male - work is hard (6)
- 32 Murmur lovingly about large principally upwardly gliding flying lemur (6)
- 33 Treat with contempt member; render defenceless (6)
- 34 Hell of woman with nothing left (5)
- 35 Cut-off branches hang down loosely (3)
- 36 Triplet to go (5)
- 38 Formidable competitor's rank, including foremost in gymnastics (5)
- 39 Terrorist regularly bungles (4)
- 42 Acknowledge a pledge (4)
- 44 Symbol of strength Mohawks regularly produced (3)